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SUBJECT: CODEL WEXLER STAFFERS DISCUSS EU-TURKEY AT MFA

Classified By: PolMC Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a July 7 meeting with Representative Wexler's Staff Director, MFA officials offered a broad overview of French reasoning behind Sarkozy's opposition to Turkish EU membership; his proposal for an EU discussion before the end of the year on fixing the EU's final borders; his commitment nonetheless to allow accession negotiations with Turkey to proceed on those chapters not judged incompatible with a status short of membership; the calculation that Turkey has few options other than to remain linked to the West irrespective of whether it accedes to the EU; measures Turkey could take to improve its image among the French electorate, including on Cyprus; and Sarkozy's admittedly vague Mediterranean Union proposal. There was a brief discussion of SAA process with Serbia. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) In the framework of Representative Robert Wexler's (D-FL) July 2-3 meetings in Paris (septels), Staff Director Jonathan Katz and staffer Beverly Razon met July 3 with FM Kouchner cabinet advisor for EU affairs Jean-Louis Falconi, DAS-equivalent for EU external relations Caroline Ferrari, and DAS-equivalent for Southern Europe Marine de Carne to discuss the status of French views on Turkey-EU relations. POL Deputy and Poloff also attended.

No to Turkish EU Membership

¶3. (C) Katz gave a brief presentation on the importance of Turkey for U.S. interests, including in Iraq and Afghanistan, noted Sarkozy's and Kouchner's apparently differing views on Turkish accession (see septels), and asked for a status report on Turkey's EU accession negotiations. In response, Ferrari noted that Sarkozy had been elected with a clear mandate to refuse Turkish EU membership and reviewed French intentions to schedule a discussion within the EU, before the end of the year, on the EU's geographic limits. She insisted that Turkey understood and respected Sarkozy's position on Turkish membership, and vice versa, adding that, paradoxically, French-Turkish relations were actually on the mend.

Accession Negotiations May Continue

¶4. (C) Ferrari stated that France did not intend to interrupt the accession negotiation process, as demonstrated by the recent EU decision to open two more chapters, and stated French willingness to open an additional two in the near future. However, Ferrari also made clear that France would agree to open only those chapters judged to be compatible with a final status falling short of EU membership. (NOTE: Ferrari and Falconi were unable to specify precisely which 5 chapters of the 35 total France does not wish to open, despite their long familiarity with the subject matter. Ferrari said deliberations were ongoing within the GOF. Falconi speculated that the chapters would have to be those dealing with institutions, economic and monetary union (blocked in the last two weeks), financial

contributions, and privileges and rights of members. END
NOTE.)

Time to Debate EU Borders

15. (C) Asked which other EU members supported the French approach on Turkey, Ferrari explained that the GOF plan was merely to initiate a debate on the EU's borders by the end of the year, not to bring it to conclusion. Domestically, this was necessary as a means to demonstrate to French electors that their concerns about EU enlargement generally and Turkey more specifically, which were at the root of French rejection of the EU constitutional treaty, were being taken seriously. Sarkozy understood that this was a divisive question, but he also believed that an open debate would be beneficial to all.

France did not want a crisis with Turkey, and in fact Sarkozy strongly believed in the necessity of a strong EU-Turkey relationship: on political, economic, and strategic grounds. It was just that he also believed it should take the form of something other than EU membership. Katz cautioned that a sense of humiliation and being considered as "not good enough" for the EU risked alienating Turkey from Europe.

Door Not Closed Irrevocably

16. (C) Falconi (who arrived late to the meeting) added that France viewed Turkey as "a special situation." He insisted that Sarkozy's rejection of EU membership for Turkey was based not on fear of Turkey or Erdogan, but on broader questions of EU identity. He said France understood that Turkey would have slightly different policies, with Carne adding that there was no "third way" for Turkey somewhere between the Middle East and the West. Aligning itself with

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Hamas or Syria or Iran was not an answer. Echoing Ferrari's earlier remarks, Falconi said it was important never to forget that the EU was a political project; Turkish membership had the potential to call that into question, notwithstanding the promises that might have been made, and questions that were never asked, in the past. He remarked that the EU had a history of proceeding by "non-decisions" rather than by "decisions," and Sarkozy was determined to put all questions on the table. He insisted that the planned working group to discuss the EU's borders did not close the door to Turkish membership completely, since France was still willing to talk.

Cyprus

17. (C) Katz asked if France had taken an active role in pushing the EU to fulfill its promises to northern Cyprus in the wake of Cypriot rejection of the UN plan, noting the importance for Turkey of easing the economic isolation of northern Cypriot community. Ferrari commented that the best efforts of various EU presidencies had resulted in failure, although it was not clear who was to blame. She indicated that France had attempted to encourage the Cypriot government to be flexible. Carne defended the EU record, saying it had followed through on 2 of its 3 commitments. She added that it was difficult for the Turks and Cypriots alike to show flexibility during election periods, but this could change if current Cypriot President Papadopoulos were not re-elected, as now appeared possible. She also noted that northern Cypriot leader Talat had rejected additional assistance. Katz interjected that he wanted direct trade, not assistance.

(COMMENT: At no time did Carne suggest that the EU was in the least responsible for creating the current impasse by allowing Cypriot membership in the absence of a UN solution. END COMMENT.)

What Turkey Can Do

18. (C) Carne suggested that Turkish PM Erdogan consider reducing the Turkish troop presence on Cyprus, commenting

that Europe's citizens had difficulty imagining how any European country could have troops on its territory. She suggested that the Turks could also do more to improve their relations with Armenia and with the Kurds. During a brief discussion of the status of U.S. and French parliamentary consideration of Armenian "genocide" resolutions, Carne suggested that Turkish actions to recognize its role and/or to improve relations with Armenia could eventually help change Turkey's image among the French people. She gave a brief review of Turkish retaliatory measures (contracts and military overflight clearances) in response to the National Assembly's passage of legislation criminalizing the denial of the "genocide," concluding that relations were now returning to normal. In a brief discussion of the Turkish elections, Carne indicated that the GOF favored the AKP party because it viewed Erdogan's government as perhaps more religious, but ultimately also "less dogmatic."

Mediterranean Union

¶9. (C) Katz asked Sarkozy's proposal for a Mediterranean Union was intended primarily to deal with the Turkish question. Falconi was insistent that Sarkozy's proposal for a Med Union was not intended as a means to avoid the Turkish question. Sarkozy was a direct man who did not need devious machinations. That said, France's thinking on the Mediterranean Union remained to be fleshed out. The GOF was not sure whether it should be open to all countries on the Mediterranean or a subset; whether it might be advisable to begin with a subset and expand; or what its policy objectives should be. Calling it "an enormous political project" but also a complicated one, he described the overarching goal of the Med Union as one of promoting more unity and common values and of overcoming the division of the Med into north and south.

Serbia

¶10. (C) In a brief discussion of Serbia/Kosovo, Ferrari assured Katz that Serbia was on the path to EU membership; it was a question of "when" rather than "whether," unlike Turkey. The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) process had been relaunched and could technically be completed in 2-3 months, but concluding would depend on whether Serbia decided to cooperate with the ICTY and hand over war criminals.

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